DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 505 SO 034 859

AUTHOR	Alvarez, Benjamin; Majmudar, Juliet
TITLE	Teachers in Latin America: Who Is Preparing Our Children for the Knowledge Century? LCSHD Paper Series.
INSTITUTION	World Bank, Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	LCSHD-67
PUB DATE	2001-04-00
NOTE	28p.; Prepared by the Human Development Department.
AVAILABLE FROM	The World Bank, 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20433. Tel: 800-645-7247 (Toll Free); Fax: 703-661-1501; Web site: http://www.worldbank.org/ .
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Developing Nations; *Educational Change; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Professional Development; *Student Needs; *Teacher Education; *Teachers; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	*Latin America

ABSTRACT

The argument presented in this paper is that teachers are the fundamental engine for enacting long-term change in education, and that their professional development is indispensable for obtaining the expected outcomes in educational systems. The paper presents a brief overview about the primary teachers in Latin America and identifies the principal problems faced by human resources policy in the Latin American countries. It proposes three potential areas for immediate intervention: (1) preservice training of teachers and their participation in a continuous learning process; (2) working and learning environment in the school; and (3) the institutional framework for development of the teaching profession. Due to limited information about teachers in Latin America, knowledge on the subject tends to be scarce, anecdotal, and unreliable; and the policies governing the activity of the teaching profession have commonly been oriented toward solving cyclical crises in educational systems. (Contains 14 illustrations, 18 notes, 1 box, and 1 table.) (BT)

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ED 476 505

Human Development Department

LCSHD Paper Series No. 67

Teachers in Latin America:

Who is preparing our children for the knowledge century?

SO 034 859

Benjamin Alvarez and Juliet Majmudar

April 2001

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REFORM OF THE SCHOOL AND TEACHERS

A riddle written in the first documented civilization, approximately four-thousand years ago, indroduces us to the organization that appears to dominate the horizon of socio-political preoccupations in Latin America entering into the new millenium:

> *¿What house has a roof like the sky;*
> *surround us with warmth like a copper kettle;*
> *and which, like an enormous goose, rests upon a great foundation?*
> *We enter there with our eyes closed,*
> *And from there we depart with eyes opened to the world.*[1]

Throughout history, we have hoped that schools open our eyes to the world, according to the metaphor used by José Martí in the last century. But in the era of knowledge there exist new reasons to support this expectation. With the thought that the school permits us to resolve historic problems such as poverty and inequality, and facilitates our participation in the global village, we have initiated educational reform programs in all the Latin American countries. Inside the school -- its actors and processes -- however, have barely been touched by the efforts at renewal.

We know very little, and worry still less, about the teachers, in spite of our hopes that they will impart our children with the three elements with which, since Sumerian time have formed the essence of the school: protection, warm human environment and learning opportunities, and intellectual enlightenment. The educational reforms in progress in the majority of the countries of the region are generally imposed from above and are "delivered" to teachers through short sessions of "in-service training," which come and go with projects financed by the international banks. However, the success of the reforms and the continuity of the proposed changes are fundamentally dependent on the will of teachers and on the incentives which movtivate them to teach more and teach better, as well as their individual and collective capacity to learn. A great part of this capacity is promoted and based in the institutions that train new teachers, which have also been modified very little by new reforms.

The argument presented here is that teachers are the fundamental engine for enacting long-term change in education, and that their professional development is indispensable for obtaining the expected outcomes in educational systems. The politics that will guide the implementation of the new generation of educational reforms in the newly inaugurated century will have to be centered, more than in the past, on the strengthening of the school and of the learning capacity of those who will teach others to be life-long learners.

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[1] Samuel Noah Kramer (1963). *The Summerians. Their History, Culture and Character*. The University of Chicago Press

This document presents a brief overview of who are the primary school teachers in Latin America and identifies the principle problems faced by human resources policy in the Latin American countries in their efforts to improve learning of all their children and youth, the only vehicle for adapting themselves to the society of the near future. The document also proposes three potential areas for immediate intervention:

- Pre-service training of teachers and their participation in a continuous learning process,
- Working and learning environment in the school, and
- The institutional framework for development of the teaching profession.

The limited information about teachers in Latin America is a symptom of the little interest lent to the theme by governments and researchers. Our knowledge on the subject tends to be scarce, anectotal, and unreliable.[2] The policies governing the activity of the teaching profession have commonly been oriented toward solving cyclical crises in educational systems.

TEACHER PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT LEARNING

Primary school teachers in Latin America

At the dawn of the 21st century, Latin America has more than three million primary school teachers, of which one-third are in Brazil and Mexico. This group represents more than five percent of teachers worldwide in the various national education systems and 14 percent of the global primary school teaching force (Table 1, Annex). The total number of primary school teachers appears in Illustration 1. The great majority of the teaching force is female, and will continue to be so in the immediate future, as suggested by the information represented in Illustration 2. While in some countries, such as Venezuela and El Salvador, the participation of males in the teaching profession in primary schools during the last decade has increased, in others, Paraguay and Nicaragua, for example, the opposite has occurred. The Latin American situation does not differ greatly from that of the OECD countries, where the average female participation in the primary school teaching force was 75 percent.

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[2] The quantitative information presented in the text to follow is based on existing data freom United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and data obtained in a rapid telephone survey conducted with ministries of education, national statistical offices, and research centers of the region. The authors recognize the limitations of these data.

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ILLUSTRATION 1: PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA

	Total number of teachers	% females
Argentina	235.481	90%
Bolivia	51.763	57%
Brazil	1.388.247	86%
Chile	70.381	73%
Colombia	170.538	77%
Costa Rica	42.135	78%
Ecuador	74.510	67%
El Salvador	35.747	61%
Guatemala	43.953	60%
Honduras	29.000	73%
Mexico	557.957	63%
Nicaragua	23.022	83%
Panama	13.610	75%
Paraguay	41.713	75%
Peru	146.242	58%
Dominican Republic	28.480	68%
Uruguay	16.868	nd
Venezuela	163.644	70%

Source: World Bank, rapid survey, 1998; UNESCO, 1998.[3]

Women tend to study education in Latin American universities more than other carreers such as the natural sciences or engineering. In 1995, the majority of students of education in all countries of the region for which there is available information were women. The percentage of female students of education in Argentina reached 80 percent, while female students of natural sciences and engineering constituted barely 36 percent of the total enrolled in those areas. In Brazil these numbers reach 81 percent and 34 percent, respectively, and in Chile 79 and 27 percent (Illustration 2).

[3] UNESCO (1998). Statistical Yearbook. Paris: UNESCO and Berman Press

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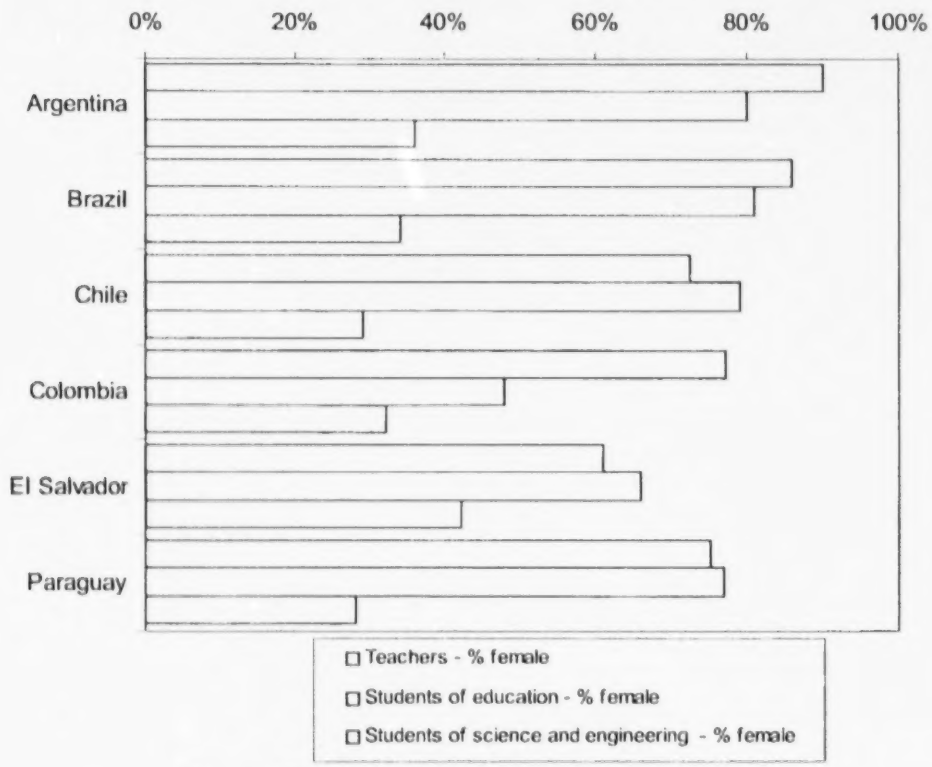
ILLUSTRATION 2: WOMEN TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND STUDYING FOR CAREERS IN EDUCATION



Sources: UNESCO, 1998[4]; World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

The teaching force in Latin America is relatively yount. While in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Korea the majority of teachers are more than 50 years of age, in Argentina, Costa Rica, and Venezuela the opposite is true. One of three Costa Rican teachers is under 29 years old.

The performance of teachers and student learning

A series of factors contribute to student learning -- the primary objective of education. The most decisive factors are the family environment and the school environment that depends fundamentally on the work of the teacher, as confirmed by both common sense and empirical research. Recent studies demonstrate, en effect, that the knowledge and preparation of teh teacher is one of the most important factors in academic achievement. Professional qualification of teachers explained 40 percent of the variance in test scores on reading and mathematics in 900 school districts in the state of Texas in the United

[4] UNESCO (1998) Op. Cit.

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States.[5] Similar findings have been reported in Alabama, Michigan, Georgia, Virginia, and New York City[6].

Parallel studies conducted in developing countries confirm the necessity of improving quality of teachers to obtain better results in education.[7] Paulo Freire expressed in the following words the close relationship which exists between the two broad groups of factors -- the home environment and the performance of the teacher -- that demonstrate the greatest impact in academic learning:

> The capacity of students to learn has much to do with the difficulties that they face in the home, whether they have sufficient food and clothing, a place to sleep and play, and whether there are obstacles that impede their intellectual experience. Learning also depends on the instruction of the teacher: his or her seriousness about teaching, scientific competence, love and sense of humor, political clarity and coherence. For these we lend much attention to the continuing preparation and training of teachers and to parent education.[8]

Accumulated knowledge permits us to suppose that the performance of teachers in the classroom depends, in addition to personal characteristics, on the following factors:

- *the quality of pre-service teacher preparation,* in-service training programs, and the continuous learning process of professional development;
- *the organizational context,* the school, the ministry of education, professional associations and other organizations that determine working conditions for the teacher; and
- *the institutional framework* within which the teaching professional is developed, that is to say, the formal rules and regulations, policies and incentives, cultural values, and interests that give shape to relations between the different actors of the education system and which determine that accepted norms or standards practiced by the profession.

All of these factors are open to intervention and reform through the expansion of learning and professional development opportunities for teachers, the development of the organizations in which teachers work, and the establishment of new policies and rules of the game for the profession and incentives for its practice. Illustration 3 presents a

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[5] Ronald Fergusson (1991). "Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters", *Harvard Journal of Legislation*, 28, pp. 465-498.

[6] Linda Darling-Hammond (1997). *Doing what Matters most: Investing in Quality Teaching*. Prepared for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

[7] Helen Craig, Richard Kraft y Joy du Plessis (1998). Teacher Development: Making an Impact. Washington D.C.:USAID/The World Bank

[8] Paulo Freire (1996) *Letters to Cristina. Reflections on my Life and Work*. London: Roudlege

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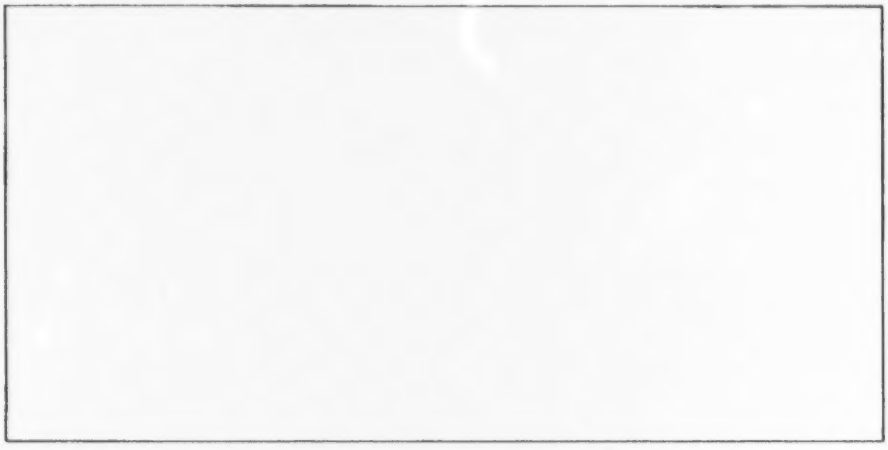
graphic representation of the relationships among the key factores in the development of the teaching profession and their connections with student learning.

ILLUSTRATION 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND STUDENT LEARNING



PREPARATION OF TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA: UNITY AND DIVERSITY

There exist common problems in the majority of the countries of the region related to the quality of teachers, expressed in terms of their preparation, but threre are also notable differences between countries and within countries. Although in various countries of the region, like Chile and Costa Rica, primary school teachers are trained in the universities, as the rest of these countries' professionals, in others, including Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, the majority of school teachers are prepared in normal schools that are closer in level to middle school education than to the training in a university major. For more than half a century, Costa Rican teachers have received their pre-service training in universities.

In Colombia and the Dominican Republic, the system of teacher preparation is mixed and in the process of transformation. In these and other countries, various organizations of differing types and levels exist simultaneously, all charged with the task of educating teachers. Illustration 4 presents the number of years of pre-service education beyond 10th grade currently required to become a primary school teacher in different countries of the region. These requirements have varied lately. For this reason, in one country it is possible to find primary school teachers with different levels of preparation.

ILLUSTRATION 4: YEARS OF STUDY REQUIRED TO BECOME A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

	Secundary level		Tertiary level				
	1	2	1	2	3	4	5
Argentina							
Bolivia							
Chile							
Colombia							
Costa Rica							
Ecuador							
El Salvador							
Guatemala							
Honduras							
Mexico							
Nicaragua							
Panama							
Paraguay							
Peru							
Dominican Republic							
Uruguay							
Venezuela							

Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

As a result of this diversity of systems and requirements, there exists in the region a teaching force composed of diverse types of teachers in terms of their basic training, which can be classified in four broad categories: a) uncertified or temporary teachers, b) normal school graduates, c) graduates of teacher colleges or teacher training institutes, and d) university graduates or professional teachers.

Uncertified teachers

Uncertified teachers do not have a specific educational background. They are generally selected for temporary service as teachers to meet immediate needs, in rural areas for example, where it is difficult to find qualified teachers. Many uncertified teachers terminate their temporary professional status by moving to urban areas and obtaining a permanent professional designation.

Uncertified teachers constitute a majority of the teaching force in Bolivia, close to one-third of teachers in Nicaragua, and more than one-fourth of teachers in the Dominican Republic. Approximately one-half of teachers in Brazil have education equivalent to a secondary school diploma. Illustration 5 compares the volume of uncertified teachers in a sample of Latin American countries. As previously noted, the certification requirements vary from one country to another. An uncertified teacher in Costa Rica could have a level of education superior to that of an uncertified teacher in neighboring Nicaragua.

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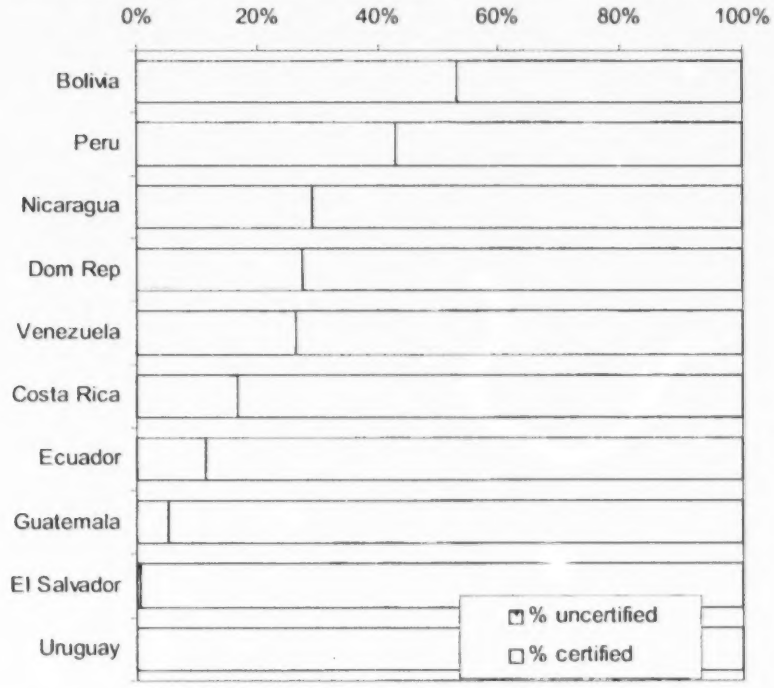
ILLUSTRATION 5: UNCERTIFIED TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Normal school graduates

Teachers who have been trained in normal schools traditionally pursue in the final three years of diversified secondary school a plan of study that includes three general areas: general teacher formation, pedagogical training, and the teaching practice. These teachers constitute 95 percent of teachers in Guatemala, 43 percent in Colombia, 29 percent in Argentina, and 33 percent in Venezuela (see Illustration 6).

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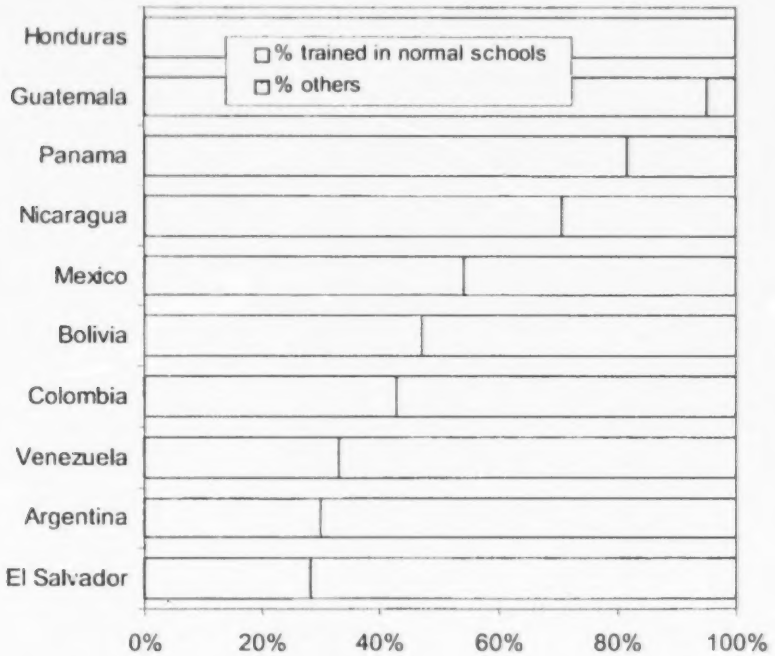
ILLUSTRATION 6: TEACHERS TRAINED IN NORMAL SCHOOLS IN LATIN AMERICA



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Teachers trained in normal schools begin to work very young and frequently lend invaluable services in rural areas, indigenous communities, and public schools. But, for some governments, the normal schools constitute a problem that is difficult to resolve. On one hand, the pre-service education of primary school teachers is conducted in normal schools located close to rural areas and at relatively low cost. Moreover, the normal schools are a central institution in their respective communities, especially where there are no universities or colleges. On the other hand, all countries of the region seem to be moving in the direction of professionalization of initial teacher preparation. Many pre-school teachers obtain university degrees, while their colleagues teaching in primary schools are graduates of normal schools.

BOX 1

The search for a path to reform the Bolivian normal school

The organizations charged with preparing teachers in Bolivia are 23 normal schools which, according to a recent diagnosis made by the Ministry of Education (1998), are poorly equipped and managed and boast high rates of desertion and low graduation rates. In the three normal schools located in the province of Chuquisaca, between 1991 and 1998, only 13.5 percent of enrolled students reached graduation. The government is considering a proposal for the reform of normal schools, rationalizing their number and integrating the teacher training framework into the system of higher education.

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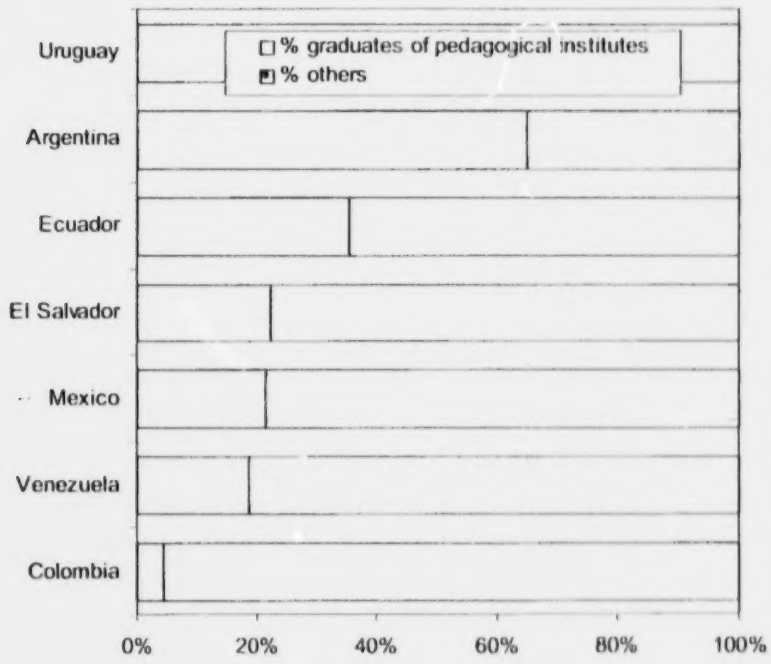
Graduates of teacher colleges and pedagogical institutes

Graduates of pedagogical institutes or teacher colleges, with approximately two or three years of higher education, constitute the majority of primary school teachers in Argentina, more than one-third of Ecuadorian teachers, and all Uruguayan teachers.

Some pedagogical institutes have national recognition and are financed by the government. The teacher training institute in Uruguay, for example, has a longstanding tradition. Some of these establishments have played a notable role in the formation of humanists and have been converted into pedagogical universities, as has happened in Colombia. In other cases, many public and private institutions exist to respond to a wide and flexible market, as is the case in Argentina.

The teacher colleges or teacher training institutes offer the advantage of specialization and flexibility, but lack the interdisciplinary environment and the close link with research that are provided by universities. Illustration 7 shows the proportion of teachers trained in teacher colleges and pedagogical institutes in selected countries of the region.

ILLUSTRATION 7: TEACHERS TRAINED IN PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTES



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

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University graduates

University graduates represent the fourth group of primary school teachers in the region. These teachers are trained in public and private universities where they obtain degrees of higher education or professional certification. In Chile almost all teachers (96 percent) are university graduates. In El Salvador and Colombia, close to one-fourth of primary school teachers are university graduates, and in Panama and Venezuela almost one-fifth. These teachers have the option of continuing their studies at the post-graduate level and of specializing their studies in areas such as pedagogy, research, and educational administration.

In spite of the existence of a course of study for professional certification of aspiring teachers, Latin American university students, with the exception of the Cubans, are more interested in other courses of study. Forty-two percent of Chilean university students choose to enroll in majors in natural sciences and engineering and only 8 percent enter into faculties of education. In Brazil, the teaching profession only attracts 12 percent of youth, while 44 percent opt for law and social sciences[9]. This phenomenon, repeated in almost all countries of the region, constitutes a serious problem for reformers of education systems who seek higher quality teaching in the classroom.

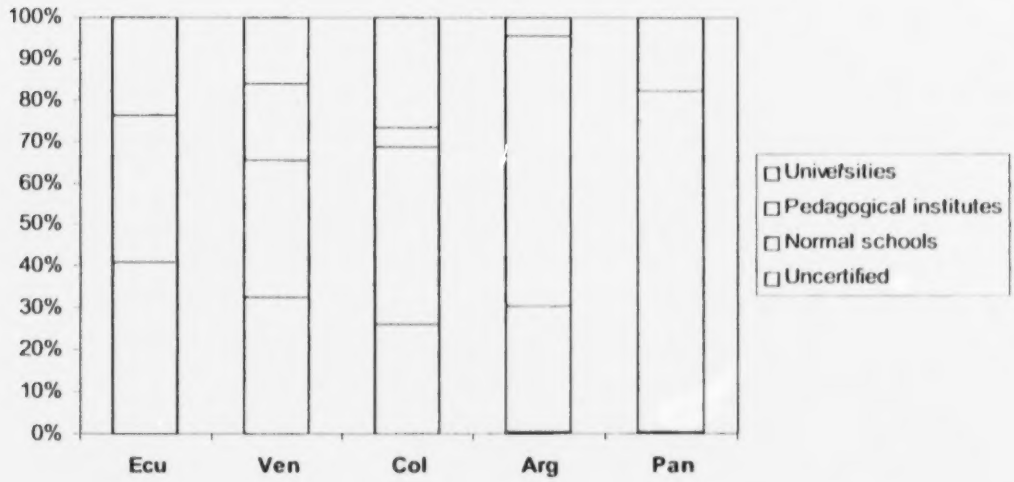
Course work and requirements for education majors do not follow a uniform pattern, due to the fact that universities enjoy a great deal of autonomy. In general, however, this course of study includes courses on: content of the basic primary school subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies; child psychology; pedagogy; and a practicum requirement fulfilled in schools. The transition from university to the school is not a problem that normally causes disquiet among the universities nor among the employers (government and private schools).

National profiles

The profile of education of primary school teachers in each country follows a different pattern. Some national profiles are more uniform, like those of Uruguay and Chile, where there is a predominance of graduates of teacher colleges and university graduates, respectively. In other cases, such as Colombia and Ecuador, there exists a great diversity of educational background in teachers, as is indicated in Illustration 8.

[9] UNESCO (1998). World Education Report: Teachers and Teaching in a Changing World. Paris: UNESCO,

ILLUSTRATION 8: NATIONAL PROFILES OF TEACHER EDUCATION



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Evolution of the frameworks for teacher preparation and professionalization

The orientation of initial teacher preparation in Latin America has passed through various stages. When the first normal schools inspired by the European tradition were created, the teacher received a typically humanistic preparation. As educational systems expanded and developed, the ideas of national curricula were centralized and taught by experts, to the primary school teacher as a semi-qualified worker. The teacher began to assume more of the work of implementation, and training took on a greater emphasis of the technical elements of teachers' work. Teachers went unrecognized as important actors in planning of educational reforms.

The current thinking on school autonomy and a type of education that requires continual decision making at the classroom level, to adapt teaching to meet the varied needs of students highlight the image of the teacher as professional. Teacher preparation, then, implies an improved clarity of the necessary competencies and the specialized knowledge required for autonomous decision making. Professional practice provides the impulse for the development of standards and the creation of accountability mechanisms.

The current interest in the factors that make a business efficient has translated to social organizations, including the school. The education and preparation of teachers can not escape the consideration of the needs of the "clientele". In Japan and Switzerland, teachers are positioned in various types of commercial firms to learn about the client-

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centered focus of the business as a force for change in the way teachers think, more than in the content of the subjects they teach.

In spite of these movements toward professionalization of teaching, many teachers in Latin America maintain a traditional conception of the art of educating. A recent study on what Argentine primary school teachers think about themselves and their work suggests that, particularly among the female teachers, the affective and vocational aspects of their role predominate, in opposition to the professional definition of their role.[10] Only the university students in a course of study on education demonstrated different conceptions.

Various studies have indicated that in the region the students of families of modest means tend to enter into the teaching career, as their expectations are not very high.[11] In some cases, Chile for example, it is possible to establish low interest in pedagogy and teaching careers, as there has been a decrease in the number of enrollments in the first year of pedagogical training at universities between 1980 and 1994. This obligated the government to create incentives such as scholarships for students who would like to study education.

Many efforts at in-service teacher training, conducted in conjunction with educational reform activities, are not a cause for optimism. Some consider that Argentine teachers have been given in-service training without any notable differences in their teaching practices.[12] On the other hand, many experiences with in-service training of teachers in the region have enriched the opportunities and options for learning in very innovative ways. In Brazil these experiences have multiplied with the purpose of implementing the ambitious policy of ceasing to hire new teachers without a university degree in the near future.

Some of these options have a long history. For more than 20 years the Universidad Abierta de la Universidad Javeriana (Open University of Javeriana University) has prepared primary school teachers in the rural areas of Colombia using distance education. Telescuela in Brazil and Universidad de Educación a Distancia de Costa Rica (Distance Education University of Costa Rica) have also a long-recognized tradition. In all countries of the region there exist non-traditional training programs financed at times by the government and in other instances by teachers themselves. But these programs need

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[10] Regina Gibaja (1997). La imagen del rol docente. *La Educación. Revista Interamericana de Desarrollo Educativo*, 41, 126-128 pp. 75-94.

[11] Ernesto Schiefelbein, Cecilia Braslavki, Bernardete Gatti y Pilar Farrés (1994). Characteristics of the Teaching Profession and the Quality of Education in Latin America. UNESCO, The Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Carbbean, Bulletin 34, pp. 3-17.

[12] Cecilia Braslavki y Alejandra Birgin (1994). Who is responsible for Teaching in Argentina Today. UNESCO, *The Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bulletin 34, pp.18-38; Beatrice Avalos (1996) Moving Towards the XXI Century: Teachers and Teaching Processes in Latin America and Caribbean Region. UNESCO, *The Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bulletin 41, pp.7-44

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to expand their radius of activity, incorporate new technologies, and cover new territories of learning that are increasingly needed by teachers at all levels.

Teachers appear to respond very well to opportunities for professionalization that are opened to them. This has been the case for teachers in Mexico City when they are offered opportunities to participate in alternative programs at the Escuela Normal Superior de Maestros (Normal School for Teachers), the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (National Pedagogical University), and universities.

BOX 2

Gateway to the world for Chilean teachers

Chile is experiencing three innovations in the subject of in-service training of teachers. The first consists of internships or study tours of four to six weeks in length with the purpose of knowing and analyzing good practices in education in other countries. The second program is a short course of study conducted in a national institution and a foreign university. The third is support for the reorganization of the faculties of education of Chilean universities that want to compete to participate in the program and be selected according to quality of their proposals.

More than 600 teachers request and receive donations each year for an internship, which allows them to be in touch with new tendencies and teaching practices in other countries and discuss with academics and researchers.

The universities and research centers of the country compete to provide learning experiences to practicing teachers in collaboration with a university in another country for approximately four months, at the end of which the teachers present a report. Close to 2,000 teachers are currently benefiting from this program.

Universities present proposals to the Chilean government to introduce reforms to teacher education programs within the spirit of the wider educational reforms being advanced by the government.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in turn, have demonstrated a great capacity for implementing and maintaining in-service training programs for teachers. According to a regional survey conducted in 1996 by the Chilean Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE, Center for Research and Development of Education)[13], 66 percent of NGOs that work in education in Latin America conduct some type of teacher training program, and 30 percent have training programs for school administrators. CEBIAE in

[13] Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación y Academia para el Desarrollo de la Educación (1996) Organizaciones no gubernamentales en educación en América Latina y el Caribe.

Bolivia, CIDE in Chile, and CINDE in Colombia, for example, have trained teachers for several decades, even at the post-graduate level.

Various governments -- Peru, Ecuador, and Chile, among others -- are inviting private sector entities to participate in the business of education and training public school teachers. Communications technology offers opportunities, as demonstrated by the experience of training in the private sector, and will permit the expansion of programs of professional development for teachers in a more consistent way and with greater impact than in the past. In 1993 more than one-fourth of the employees of companies with more than 10 members in the European Community participated in professional development courses, and more than one-half of employees of financial agencies received training.

The teaching profession, by definition, has learning as its objective and it is based in the learning of the teacher, that is to say, in his/her initial preparation, continuing education, and access to knowledge in the appropriate area of specialization which, as in all professions, is constantly evolving. The challenge for teacher education is double. In the first place, it is necessary to re-think the frameworks for teacher education that are losing their humanistic inclination and the development of learning capacity in favor of a focus that is highly pragmatic, mechanical, and technological. Education is the humanistic profession *par excellence*. "Is it not the love of learning, the love of knowledge?" asked Plato in The Republic. Teacher education is not a matter of mere information, but of the integration of knowledge, which is one of the most important roles of the university in a world with multiple channels of communication.

The second challenge consists of developing systems that offer learning opportunities systematically and continuously to teachers, in place of isolates courses to introduce them each time to a new educational reform. Each country must find its own solution to these challenges. As is the case with educational reforms in general, there is no magic formula applicable to all the country contexts.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE TEACHER

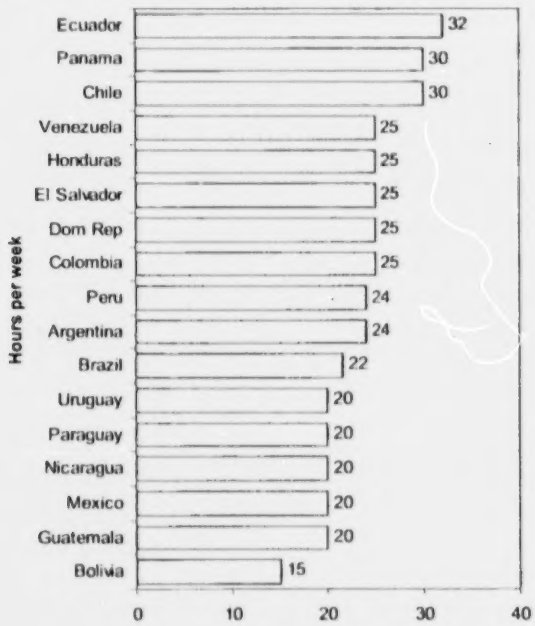
Working in the classroom

Available data do not reflect the difficult conditions in which many primary school teachers work in isolated areas in Latin American countries. Schools without books or teaching materials, nor means of communication, students with nutritional deficiencies and obstacles to learning, and poor communities without resources to support the work of the school.

Surprisingly, the average work week of the teacher in Latin America is not very long, varying from country to country between approximately 15 to 32 hours per week. The prevalence of several school schedules facilitates a distribution of work for the teacher between the school and other organizations. Local estimates suggest that up to 90 percent

of teachers in El Salvador hold additional jobs, 80 of teachers in Uruguay and Paraguay work in other places in addition to public schools, the same as more than half of the Guatemalan teaching force.

ILLUSTRATION 9: AVERAGE HOURS OF WORK PER WEEK FOR TEACHERS



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Latin American teachers, and particularly those of Central America, tend to be responsible for larger classes than their counterparts in other countries of Europe and North America, and probably classes that are very heterogeneous, including students with rich backgrounds for the task of learning (see Illustration 10). The majority of students have not received the preparation for school that the preschool experience offers. Teachers do not usually have the tools for early detection of learning disabilities, nor the time for personal dedication to their students. The general tendency has been to hand over to the teachers very detailed curricula and lessons with the idea that they have little extra time to contribute to preparation. We later hope that teachers devote themselves actively to the students when they themselves do not even have an active role in the school.

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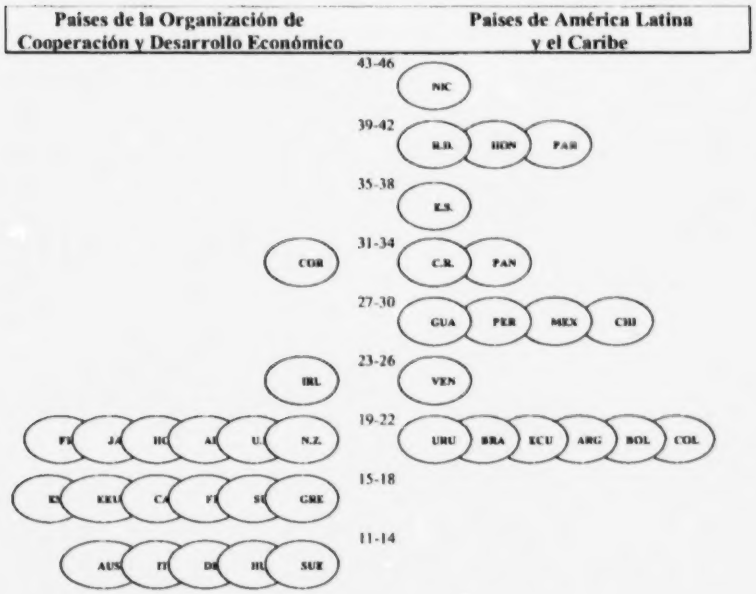
ILLUSTRATION 10: STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO



Source: OECD (1998)[14]; World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Professional support

On-the-job professional support received by the teacher is generally very weak. Books and magazines are not regularly available, nor is information or feedback on the performance of their students. In addition, teachers are not accustomed to receiving suggestions from their colleagues, much less from the parents of their students of from the communities served by the schools in which they work. The responsibility for evaluation of teacher performance resides with inspectors or the school principal.

The system for evaluation of the professional performance of the teacher is based in large part on the antiquated system of inspection and supervision, whose purpose is more bureaucratic than technical. The complex official regulations and the lack of intervention of unions in issues of personnel impede awarding innovative and efficient teachers and prevent the removal of teachers who should not be teaching. Illustration 11 represents the information provided by ministry of education officials on who conducts regular teacher evaluations and for what the results of the evaluations are used. In many cases the evaluation mechanisms do not have a use beyond the completion of periodic reports.

[14] OECD. (1998) Education at a Glance: Indicators. Centre for Educational Rewsearch and Innovation. Paris: OECD

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ILLUSTRATION 11: WHO EVALUATES THE TEACHERS AND WHY

	Inspectors	Directors	Other teachers	Other	Utilization of evaluation/Consequences
Argentina	x	x			Promotions
Bolivia	x	x		Advisors	None
Chile	x				Regular periodic reports
Colombia	x				None
Ecuador	x	x			Promotions
El Salvador	x	x			Regular periodic reports
Guatemala	x			Technical trainer	Regular periodic reports
Honduras				Departmental Director	Regular periodic reports
Mexico	x	x	x		Promotions
Panama	x	x			None
Paraguay	x	x			Regular periodic reports, promotions
Peru	x	x			Regular periodic reports
Dom Rep		x	x	Students	Salary increases
Uruguay	x				Regular periodic reports, promotions
Venezuela	x	x		Departmental Coordinator	Regular periodic reports, promotions

Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Remuneration of the teaching profession

The answer to the question of whether teachers in Latin America earn much or little depends on the comparative criteria used. But the fact that students coming from families in the middle and upper classes have their vision fixed on distinct futures suggests that other careers offer more incentive to young people than the teaching profession. Moreover, among the predominant regulations and conceptions, the best students aspire to be primary school teachers.

Teacher salaries vary notably between and within countries. Due to limitations in the contracting systems that prevailed during the period of expansion of public education, a good part of the gains made by the teacher unions consisted of the multiplication of benefits, more than salary increases. Annual remuneration of a new teacher, independent of benefits, bonuses, and other salary complements, varies between approximately $US 571 and $US 5,000 (see Table 1 in the Annex). In some cases the system permits a substantial salary increase for teachers after ten years of service. In Argentina, for example, a teacher with experience can earn twice the base salary of a beginning teacher, while in Peru, Venezuela, and Nicaragua the salary differentials between the young teacher and the experienced are less notable, as suggested by Illustration 12. The full salaries, however, mask a complex system and variations in remuneration practices including benefits of all kinds, long vacations, and early retirement. The full salary of a teacher in Bogota has 13 components.

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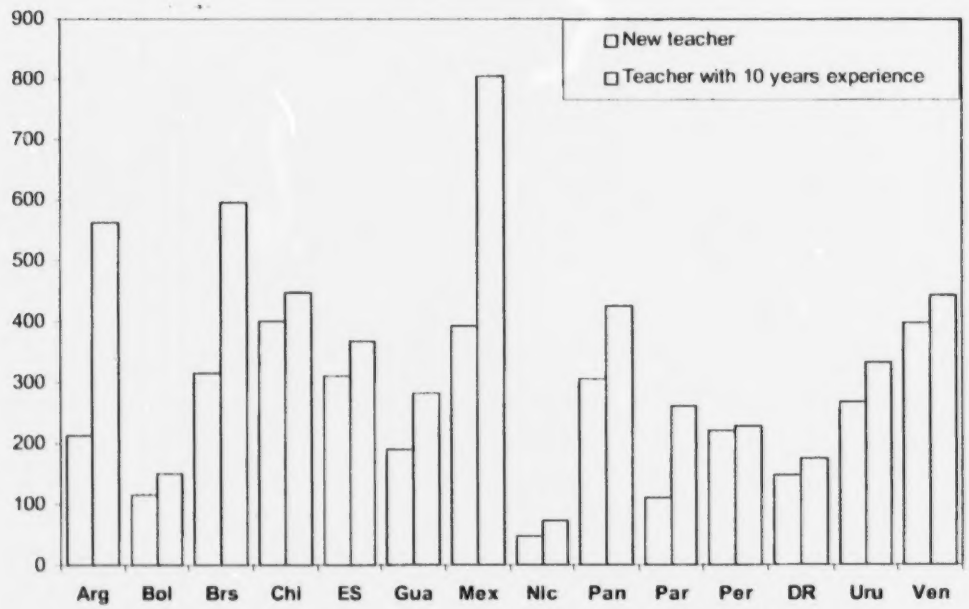
ILLUSTRATION 12: MONTHLY BASE SALARY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS
(Without bonuses)



Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

Environment of the school organization

In spite of extensive efforts to decentralize and seek the expanded involvement of civil society in education administration in many countries of the region, school organization continues to be highly dependent on centralized financial, administrative, and pedagogical decision making in comparison with what is happening in other countries (Illustration 13). This organizational environment does not favor experimentation or innovation, nor does it favor the formation of support groups for teachers interested in improving their teaching.

Experiences in the last decade in Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia demonstrate the viability of school administrations that have more decision making capacity and in those where teachers play a more active role. The decision making power in more autonomous schools may reside in the school administration (director), the community, or the teaching staff.

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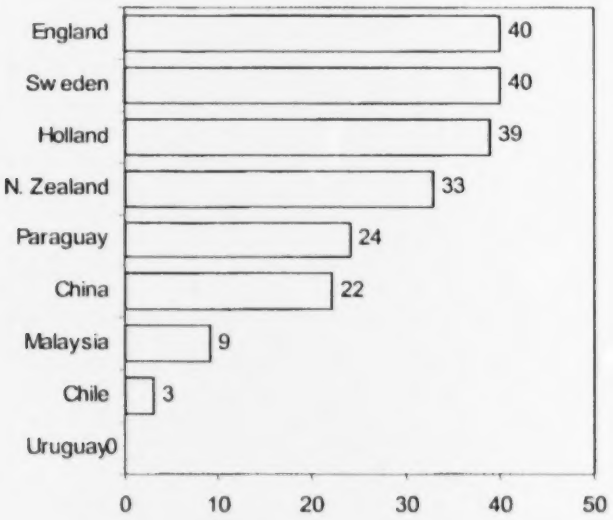
ILLUSTRATION 13: PERCENTAGE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LOCAL SCHOOL AUTONOMOUSLY



Source: OECD, 1998.[15]

Recent research suggests that the type of community control and involvement has the greatest impact on changes in the school, though this does not necessarily refer to changes in teaching and learning. Teaching practices appear more affected when decision making control is in the hands of teachers. These results coincide with findings of other studies which indicate that the most successful schools have teachers and administrators who form a professional learning community, especially concerned with the work and evaluation of students. These schools have altered their practices to attain better educational outcomes..[16]

In the majority of countries in the region, teachers are appointed by the ministry of education or by departmental or provincial governments. Occasionally, as in Mexico and Argentina, the states or provinces take the role previously occupied by ministries in contracting teachers. In very few cases, the schools themselves have the autonomy to hire and fire teachers (Illustration 14).

[15] OECD (1998) Op.Cit.

[16] Kenneth Leitwood and Teresa Menzies (1998). Forms and Effects of School Based Management. A Review. *Educational Policy*, 12,3, pp.325-345, May; Michael Fullan (1998). The Three Stories of Educational Reform: Inside; Inside/Out; Outside/In. Inédito.

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ILLUSTRATION 14: WHO HIRES TEACHERS?

	Local/School	Municipal	Provincial/State	Central
Argentina			x	
Bolivia		x		
Brazil				
Chile		x		
Colombia			x	
Costa Rica				x
Ecuador				x
El Salvador	x			
Guatemala		x	x	x
Honduras				x
Mexico		x	x	
Nicaragua		x		
Panama				x
Paraguay				x
Peru			x	
Dominican Republic	x	x	x	x
Uruguay			x	
Venezuela		x	x	x

Source: World Bank rapid survey, 1998.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

At least two manifestations of the recent evolution of global society obligate us to examine the exercise of the teaching profession through a new prism. The first is a change in the way the nature and dynamics of organizations are understood. The second is a change in the rules that shape the behavior of individuals and organizations within society.

The new thinking on productive organizations, and on the workers that form these organizations, is quite distant from the image that predominated during almost the entire twentieth century – that of assembly line production with cheap labor. Contemporary business are highly flexible learning organizations, where "knowledge management" constitutes an indispensable activity supporting productivity and sustaining competitiveness. The workers, a fundamental resource for continual research and development within the business, are accustomed to tasks previously reserved for top-level management.

The arena for decision making and the related responsibilities has widened. Because of this change, new cognitive skills and evaluative capacity are required in the labor market, as is a process of continual capacity building. Moreover, employees find themselves in a learning environment characterized by knowledge sharing mechanisms and internal

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information networks, and they are more in contact with the needs and expectations of their clients.

This accelerated evolution of productive organizations contrasts sharply with the stability and immutability of organizations working in knowledge generation and sharing, those dedicated to education and with slow processes of transformation of their mechanisms of human resource development in the school system. Though ironically, educational organizations are beginning to follow the example of the productive sector businesses that attribute a great importance to the tasks of learning on the part of its members and their interactions with the social environment.

The new business of the knowledge society has been converted into the prime metaphor to interpret other organizations, including educational organizations. The implications in education of this change in conception of work are already beginning to emerge. There is, for example, a growing interest in productivity indicators and in personal and institutional characteristics that promote productivity. A closer relationship is being sought between educational service providers and users of those services and systems for evaluation of results are being established. In spite of the fact that educational organizations have characteristics in common with productive firms, the products of the school are less defined and the educational organization tends to be slightly more anarchical in environment and methods, and depends much more than other organizations on the capacity of its employees, in this case the teachers, to achieve results acceptable both to its own specific local community and to society in general. A shared body of interests and values, then, replace the incentives that in other types of organizations assign specificity to products.

The exercise of the teaching career in the type of school that is more oriented to learning than the mere transfer of information, more open (even en its physical space) and en constant search for improved learning environments, requires technical support and knowledge networks. But professional teacher associations, the supervision and curriculum development mechanisms, and the organizations that provide initial teacher preparation are not providing the necessary leadership in knowledge management.

The second change – less visible but equally profound – is in the institutions or rules that shape behaviors of teachers, parents, students, and policy makers. Institutional economics theory suggests that institutions – as opposed to organizations – form the incentive structure of a society and constitute the parameters that regulate human interaction by means of formal rules, such as laws and constitutions, or by informal rules, such as behavioral norms and values.[17]. Rules tend to serve the interests of those who have negotiation power in the creation of new rules. In addition, the relationships between the various actors in the education sector (principals: children and their parents and agents: teachers and administrators) are determined by institutions, or formal and informal rules. The change in the traditional behaviors which are the target of

[17] Douglass C. North (1993), *Economic Performance through Time*, Presented at a conference of the Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden, December 9.

educational reforms require a profound change in the institutional structure within which the main actors in the education scene interact. The exercise of the teaching profession finds itself in the middle of these transformations.

At times, the rules that constitute the institutional framework along with asymmetric information favoring some groups, permit the interests of the agents to prevail over the interests of the principals. This happens not only in businesses but also in the provision of social services. There are always rent seekers and those wanting special benefits in education, such as politicians or teacher unions. Many politicians have benefited from education through clientelistic practices in the appointing of teachers and the distribution of resources. Some union directorates have fallen into the temptation of utilizing their information and power to their own benefit.

When it comes to education, the actors who are the closest to the teaching and learning processes and activities, the parents, especially those who have children in public schools, should have access to better information and higher capacity for negotiation than they currently possess. Ministry of education officials, whose role is supposedly to advocate for the interests of parents, keep quite distant from the daily life of schools. Because of this, there is much discussion around the reform of the institutional framework of education, that is, a change in the formal rules and cultural values that shape interactions between different actors in the sector.[18] Reform of institutional framework requires, among others, the promotion of incentives to reward behavioral changes of teachers, school directors, and parents. Parents with students in public schools in many countries do not currently have a voice, vote, options, or negotiation skills.

The direction of these institutional reforms is still unclear, but the emerging tendencies imply: the elimination of clientilistic practices that hold the educational system hostage to vested interests; the increase of decision making power for parents, greater professional autonomy for teachers, professional options making careers in teaching more attractive, and the establishment of mechanisms for the management of accounts.

Improvements in teacher preparation, school organization, and the institutions that determine teachers' professional development is a decisive contribution to the introduction of our children to the knowledge society, and to a more egalitarian world, as envisioned by a well-known teacher (Comenio), who wrote 350 years ago: "Our desire is for all men to be completely educated, in all aspects of their humanity, not a few, nor many, but all men together and individually."

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[18] Donald Winkler and Benjamin Alvarez (1998). Educational reform in Latin America, An institutional Analysis. In: Burki and G. Perry (eds): *Beyond the Washington Consensus: Institutions Matter*. Washington: The World Bank.

ANNEX

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
(in thousands)

	World	Latin America and the Caribbean	Region as percentage of world total
Higher	6,160	728	12%
Secondary	21,280	1,699	8%
Primary	24,080	3,386	14%
Preschool	4,480	652	14%
Total	56,000	6,465	11%

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